

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF OBSERVATION

THE *British school of observation* may fairly enough be said to have commenced with Sydenham; and its general spirit and principles have continued almost entirely unchanged to the present time. This school has been marked by some of the strongest and best qualities of the British character—sagacity, shrewdness, and sound common sense. It has been regularly progressive since the time of Sydenham, and it has accumulated a vast amount of most excellent practical knowledge. Its therapeutical resources have been more various and extensive, than those of its continental rival; and if it has done less for the advancement of medicine, as a science, it can hardly be doubted, I think, that it has accomplished more, as a useful and beneficent art. Amongst the models and ornaments of this school, may be mentioned Sydenham, Huxham, Cleg-horn, Heberden, Blane, Pringle, Thomas Percival, John Cheyne, Thomas Bateman, Samuel Black, William Woolcombe, William Brown, Sir Henry Marsh; and many others, their worthy successors, might be added—the pride and glory of the actual period of British medicine.

The principal defects of the British school are its want of comprehensiveness, of rigorous and positive conclusions, and the habit of mixing up, with its observations, reasonings and interpretations altogether hypothetical in their character; and then of regarding these reasonings as more important, more valuable, more essential to the constitution of science, than the observations upon which they are founded. . . .

Bartlett, Elisha: *An Essay on the Philosophy of Medical Science*. Philadelphia, Lee and Blanchard, 1844, pp. 301-02.